

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Sharpening Our Focus on the Future

“With regard to prophecy as foretelling, the church has lost its nerve. An earthbound, rationalistic humanism has so invaded Christian thinking as to tinge with faint ridicule all claims to see in the Bible anything more than the vaguest reference to future events.”

These are the words of Joyce Baldwin in her very valuable commentary on Daniel (*Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, p. 185). Her point is that numerous, very important sections of Scripture which claim to predict future events leading up to the establishment of the Messiah’s Kingdom on earth are ignored or suppressed by Bible-readers. Why should it be so hard for many to believe that God can “announce from of old things to come”? (Isa. 44:7).

Any ignoring of the prophets means automatically an ignoring of Jesus. Jesus’ words provide the life and energy of the church: “The words that I speak to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). Jesus’ important words about the future of the world and events leading to the Second Coming ought not to be neglected lest we weaken the effect of the words/spirit of Jesus.

Jesus built huge amounts of his teaching on the book of Daniel whom he called a prophet! (Matt. 24:15). Modern “scholarship” has, alas, pronounced Daniel a “parable” or a fictional story, not written by Daniel, who is an imagined figure. This is catastrophically destructive of the teaching and truth of Jesus’ words.

Chapters 11 and 12 of Daniel are unique in their extensive prediction of events leading to the arrival of Jesus to inaugurate his Kingdom of peace on earth. There is no need for any of us to remain in the dark about the intense period of suffering which all the prophets see as the immediate prelude to the future coming of Jesus, the Messiah. It is called “the Great Tribulation,” unparalleled in history and never to be repeated (Matt. 24:21).

Our Christian documents preserve the fascinating words of Jesus in which he makes a direct reference to **Daniel 11:31**. This text speaks of an “appalling horror” (the Abomination of Desolation) destined to appear in the Holy Place in Jerusalem, shortly before the end of the age. In Matthew 24:15 Jesus warned Christians living in Judea to flee to the mountains when they saw “the Abomination of Desolation standing in the Holy Place.” The Lord went on to explain (v. 21) that the presence of the Abomination in Jerusalem would be the trigger for the

most awful time of tribulation ever, and that **immediately following** that tribulation (v. 29) he would appear and gather the elect Christians into the Kingdom of God (v. 30-31).

The words “**immediately** after” (v. 29) have been a perplexing embarrassment to much commentary which would rather put this future event (the great tribulation) into the past, and be done with it!

The proper way to understand this material in Matthew 24 is to follow Jesus’ own instructions carefully. In Matthew 24:15 he tells us to understand that the Abomination of which he speaks is the well-known Abomination predicted some six hundred years earlier by Daniel. **When we turn back to Daniel’s prophecies (following Jesus our teacher) we find a full account of the Abomination and subsequent events, in Daniel 11:31-12:3.** (Notice that the chapter break should be disregarded since the whole account is one vision of the end-time.) Not only are the events of the time of the end laid out for us in Daniel 11; we are also **given a precise timeframe in which to set these events.** This precious information is given by an angel who in Daniel 12:7 announced that “it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people **all these events will be completed.**”

A few verses later we have a confirmation of this invaluable timeframe for the events of the end of the age: **“And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the Abomination of Desolation is set up [11:31] there will be 1290 days”** (Dan. 12:11).

We learn from these verses that about 3½ years of tribulation will precede the completion of “all these events” (12:7). Let us look back through the vision of chapter 11 to follow the story step by step. Jesus introduces us to the Abomination of Desolation of Daniel 11:31 (Matt. 24:15). This is the crucial sign of the impending Second Coming. When it appears, Christians in Judea are to leave Jerusalem at once. This is the signal for the onset of the unparalleled tribulation: “For **then** there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall” (Matt. 24:21).

In Mark’s version the disciples had asked for the sign “when all these events will be accomplished” (Mark 13:4), based on the words of Daniel 12:7: “all these events will be accomplished.”

Jesus in Matthew 24:21 (the great tribulation) is quoting a verse from the same vision (Dan. 12:1)

describing the awful time of trouble just before the resurrection of the dead which follows in Daniel 12:2. We note that the resurrection of this verse is one of “all these events” (12:7) which will come to an end at the close of the 3½ years. But when does the 3½ years begin?

The answer is given us in Daniel 12:11: **“From the time that the regular sacrifice is taken away and the Abomination of Desolation is set up there will be 1290 days.”** We have here a clear statement about the final time of trouble. It will begin with the placing of the Abomination of Desolation in the Holy Place (**Matt. 24:15 = Dan. 11:31 and 9:27 and 8:11-13**) and end with the resurrection. At that point “all these events” detailed in Daniel 11:31-12:3 will be complete.

In Daniel 11:31ff there is a description of the exact nature of the trouble predicted to take place in Israel. We see a wicked **King of the North** (i.e., probably originating in modern Syria or Iraq, at least from the Middle East area) “turning to godlessness those who act wickedly towards the covenant” (Dan. 11:32). Meanwhile “those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many” (v. 33). Some believers will die for their faith (v. 35). Then **the King of the North — the subject of the whole prophecy from Daniel 11:21 onwards** — “will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods, and will prosper until the indignation is finished, for what is decreed will be done” (Dan. 11:36). Interestingly, Paul quotes this verse when he is describing the activity of **the final antichrist** in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. **So we see that both Jesus and Paul found in Daniel 11 the basis for their view of the end of the age.** (Strangely, many commentators have been slow to admit that Jesus treats Dan. 11:31 as an event falling within the last 3½ years of this age. It has been more “comfortable” for them to dispose of the prophecy by claiming that it has already been fulfilled!) **Beware the danger of getting rid of the future by putting it in the past!**

During the time of the great tribulation, **the King of the North** will come into conflict with the King of the South (probably Egypt, or Libya?). But the powerful **King of the North** will proceed southwards, “gain control of the hidden treasures of gold and silver” (11:43), yet come to his disastrous end in the area of the Holy Mountain (11:45; cp. Dan. 9:26b: “his end”). This event is described by Paul and Daniel as the destruction of the antichrist: The Lord Jesus Christ “will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and bring [him] to an end by the appearance of his coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). Then, as we have seen, **the dead are raised** (Dan. 12:2) following the end of the tribulation (Dan. 12:1). **Most important of all, the whole complex of events from Daniel 11:31 onwards spans a period of 1290 days (Dan. 12:11).**

(Readers should question schemes of prophecy which attempt to stretch this material over hundreds of years! This mistake would make the Great Tribulation much longer than the Millennium!)

Nothing could be more important for students of prophecy than to grasp this simple account, particularly the chronological data given under oath by the revealing angel in **Daniel 12:7, 11**. We should note in passing that a “time” in Daniel’s vocabulary appears to equal one year, as we see from the use of the same expression in Daniel 4:25, 32 where a period of seven “times,” i.e., seven years, of insanity struck Nebuchadnezzar.

So important is this 3½ years that it occurs again in Revelation 11:2 (“forty-two months”), 12:6, 14 (1260 days equal to “a time, times, and half a time”). The same period appears once again as 42 months during which the Beast is to exercise his tyrannical authority (Rev. 13:5; 11:3). The whole picture becomes quite clear **once we take our cue from Jesus’ reference in Matthew 24:15 to Daniel’s Abomination of Desolation in Daniel (11:31).**

And once we see that Jesus speaks in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, and most fully, citing Daniel and citing from his own words in Matthew 24, in the Revelation given to Jesus by the Father (Rev. 1:1), all becomes clear.

There is no need for the church to lose its nerve over prophecy! If we acknowledge Jesus’ (and Paul’s) own reliance on Daniel 11 (and Dan. 2, 7, 8, 9) as a safe guide to the future, we shall gain a clear view of the final events of this age in the Middle East. It is only when the connections between Jesus’ prophetic discourse and Daniel’s full account are broken that we lose sight of the clear predictive narrative in Daniel 11:31ff. How grateful we should be for these wonderful predictions, graciously given us by the revealing angel, recorded for us by Daniel and developed and amplified by Jesus in Matthew 24, by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 and again by Jesus through John in the book of Revelation.

It should never be forgotten that Daniel was addressed by the angel as “highly favored and esteemed” (Dan. 10:11)! The Devil has much invested in getting rid of Daniel’s inspired words.

Prophecy is a great treasure for the church. By no means should it be ignored as a means of strengthening every Christian and developing the love for the truth which leads to salvation (2 Thess. 2:10, 12, 13). Jesus obviously loved the book of Daniel with its great vision of the times of the end and the triumph of the Kingdom of God over a godless world. With all the prophets, Jesus looked forward to a great era of peace on earth — the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God was the center of his Gospel Message for salvation (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; Matt. 24:14, etc.). Let us keep the torch of these

astonishing predictions about the time of trouble leading to the Kingdom, burning in a dark world. Above all let us not throw away the key to the right reading of Matthew 24, namely, the essential pieces of the puzzle supplied by Daniel and specifically called to our attention by Jesus in Matthew 24:15 — Daniel 9:27, 8:11-13, 11:31, 12:11. The Abomination of Desolation is a feature of the last few years of this age and its perpetrator is the King of the North (Dan. 11:21ff), a figure from the Middle East.

Finally Jesus will deliver Israel and suffering believers from **the Assyrian** (King of the North) antichrist (Micah 5:6). But that is another part of the prophetic picture needing separate treatment. Above all, note that Christians are to “live by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4), not just those passages which we deem important!✧

“Eternal Generation of the Son,” the False Teaching Which Removed the Origin of the Son of God from History!

From the internet we bring you this from a supporter of “eternal generation.” Christians need to understand the problems with the Trinity! Below we find that Trinitarians continue to insist on the incomprehensible notion of “eternal generation,” the doctrine that Jesus as Son of God had a “beginningless beginning.” (Don’t trouble your children with this brain-breaking confusion!)

Jung S. Rhee, former professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary:

“In the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the concept of the eternal generation of the Son was one of the *essential* and major factors. However, it is either *rejected* or neglected in most contemporary discussion of the Trinity. This contemporary neglect of the eternal generation is neither legitimate nor tolerable. For this extremely strange phenomenon arbitrarily revises and *reduces the biblical and confessional doctrine of the Trinity*. Though the nineteenth century liberal hostility to the doctrine of the Trinity has been largely overcome in the twentieth century, it has not been accompanied by a revival of the concept of eternal generation.

“**In 325 AD, the Christian Church admitted the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son into the articles of essential faith for salvation and made it a pillar of the doctrine of the Trinity.** The Nicene Creed confesses:

‘I believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, **begotten of the Father before all worlds**; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very

God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.’

“The doctrine of the **eternal generation** of the Son consists of two complementary concepts which are described in **two technical terms: eternal and generation**. First, Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the literal and metaphysical sense of ‘Son.’ The Father is the origin, source, and cause of the Son, and the Son is the offspring, image, and derivative of the Father. **Eliminating the difference between human generation and divine generation due to the difference of nature, the relationship between the Father and the Son is precisely ‘father and son’ in its real sense.** The Son is, as the Nicene Creed confesses, ‘the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father **before all worlds.**’ The begottenness and sonship of Jesus is **not metaphorical but metaphysical.**”

My comment: Matthew 1:18, 20 and Luke 1:35 have been destroyed! God is not permitted, says the doctrine of eternal generation, to have a Son in time.

“Second, Jesus Christ is **eternal**. This is an affirmation not only of his **pre-existence but also of his perfect Deity**. His generation transcends time and time measurement. He was begotten **before time began**. Furthermore, **his existence has no beginning, for the Father cannot be Father without the Son**. The Athanasian Creed clearly states: ‘And in this Trinity none is before, or after another...the whole three persons are co-eternal.’

“Though the marriage of these two words ‘eternal’ and ‘generation’ safeguards the orthodox and biblical doctrine of the Trinity, it has nonetheless been **continuously challenged as ‘contradictory.’** In this charge, the ancient **Arian heretics** and contemporary attackers share the same reasoning, though they differ in their intentions. While the Arian heresy sacrificed ‘eternity’ to save ‘generation,’ the modern attackers **sacrifice ‘generation’ to save ‘eternity.’**

“The modern inability to affirm the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son indicates the confusion, division, and defectiveness in the modern understanding of **the Triune God, in whom we believe**. Contemporary **exclusion of the eternal generation from the essentials of the Trinity** and its negligence was unimaginable in the fourth century when the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was shaped. Gregory of Nyssa vividly describes his contemporary interest in the eternal generation:

‘It is not possible to exchange money, to buy bread or to go to the baths without getting involved in discussions on the problem of whether one can or cannot speak of generation in the Trinity.’

“...Certainly, their charge was in order to justify their heretical view, but it is ironical that American rejection of the eternal generation doctrine began from these New England theologians. Nathaniel Emmons (1745-1840 [95 years!]), a disciple of Samuel Hopkins, criticized the doctrine of the eternal generation and even called it ‘eternal nonsense.’ Contrary to his teacher, Emmons rejected it:

‘We feel constrained to **reject the eternal generation of the Son**, and the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost, as such mysteries as cannot be distinguished from **real absurdities...**’

Emmons still, amazingly, managed to believe in the Trinity, but how right he was to call the doctrine of eternal generation “eternal nonsense.” According to Matthew 1:18, 20 (“begotten in her”) and Luke 1:35 (“the child begotten”) Jesus came into existence, was begotten, six months after the conception of John the Baptist (Luke 1:26), not in eternity!✧

From the Dead Sea Scrolls comes this excellent parallel to John 1 about God’s great purpose: “By His knowledge everything has been brought into being. And everything that is He established by His purpose and apart from Him nothing is done” (I QS 11:11).

Professor J.A.T. Robinson noted: “The equation of knowledge, wisdom and logos: We need not range very far into the world of Diaspora Judaism to account for the prologue of John.” In other words John was writing as Jew and understood *logos* not as a separate person from the Father, but as the wisdom, plan and purpose of God from the beginning.

Jesus was a Jew and Christians Are Supposed to Follow His Teachings!

Jesus was a Jew under the law who obeyed the shema. Jesus and the Jewish scribe agree, “There is no other but He.” This HE was Jesus’ God, Jesus’ Yahweh. And that HE for Jesus was the Father alone. It is more than clear that Jesus interpreted the Shema to mean that there is no other Yahweh but his Father. Jesus’ Yahweh was his Father alone. The Trinitarian Yahweh, the Trinitarian HE, is a **three-Person being**. Jesus’ Yahweh was not a three-Person being. That **HE** for Jesus was his Father alone.

Farewell to the [Pre-Tribulation] Rapture

Bishop N.T. Wright, *Bible Review*, Aug. 2001 (ntwrightpage.com)

Little did Paul know how his colorful metaphors for Jesus’ second coming would be misunderstood two millennia later. The American obsession with the second coming of Jesus — especially with distorted interpretations of it — continues unabated. Seen from my side of the Atlantic, the phenomenal success of the *Left Behind* books appears puzzling, even bizarre. Few in the U.K. hold the belief on which the popular series of novels is based: that there will be a literal [pre-tribulation] “rapture” in which believers will be snatched up to heaven, leaving empty cars crashing on freeways and kids coming home from school only to find that their parents have been taken to be with Jesus while they have been “left behind.” This pseudo-theological version of *Home Alone* has reportedly frightened many children into some kind of (distorted) faith.

This dramatic end-time scenario is based (wrongly, as we shall see) on Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians, where he writes: “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first; then we, who are left alive, will be snatched up with them on clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16–17).

What on earth (or in heaven) did Paul mean? [*With great respect to the Bishop, this is not so hard!*]

It is Paul who should be credited with creating this scenario. Jesus himself, as I have argued in various books, never predicted such an event. The gospel passages about “the Son of Man coming on the clouds” (Mark 13:26, 14:62, for example) are about Jesus’ vindication, his “coming” to heaven from earth. The parables about a returning king or master (for example, Luke 19:11–27) were originally about God returning to Jerusalem, not about Jesus returning to earth. This, Jesus seemed to believe, was an event within space-time history, not one that would end it forever.

[*My dear Bishop, all the second coming passages in the OT are about God’s activity, which in the NT turn out to be Jesus’ activity as God’s agent. So Daniel is all about the coming of Jesus in the future to rule and reign on earth with the saints — see Dan. 7:18, 22, 27*].

The Ascension of Jesus and the Second Coming are nevertheless vital Christian doctrines, **and I don’t deny that I believe some future event will result in the personal presence of Jesus** within God’s new creation. This is taught throughout the New Testament outside the Gospels. But this event won’t in any way resemble the

Left Behind account. Understanding what will happen requires a far more sophisticated cosmology than the one in which “heaven” is somewhere up there in our universe, rather than in a different dimension, a different space-time, altogether.

The New Testament, building on ancient biblical prophecy, envisages that the creator God will remake heaven and earth entirely, affirming the goodness of the old Creation but overcoming its mortality and corruptibility (e.g., Romans 8:18–27; Revelation 21:1; Isaiah 65:17, 66:22). When that happens, Jesus will appear within the resulting new world (e.g., Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2).

Paul’s description of Jesus’ reappearance in 1 Thessalonians 4 is a brightly colored version of what he says in two other passages, 1 Corinthians 15:51–54 and Philippians 3:20–21: At Jesus’ “coming” or “appearing,” those who are still alive will be “changed” or “transformed” so that their mortal bodies will become incorruptible, deathless. This is all that Paul intends to say in Thessalonians, but here he borrows imagery — from biblical and political sources — to enhance his message. Little did he know how his rich metaphors would be misunderstood two millennia later.

First, Paul echoes the story of Moses coming down the mountain with the Torah. The trumpet sounds, a loud voice is heard, and after a long wait Moses comes to see what’s been going on in his absence.

Second, he echoes Daniel 7, in which “the people of the saints of the Most High” (that is, the “one like a son of man”) are vindicated over their pagan enemy by being raised up to sit with God in glory. This metaphor, applied to Jesus in the Gospels, is now applied to Christians who are suffering persecution.

[The Bishop just leaves out the whole prophecy of Dan. 7:18, 22, 27 which predicts that the saints will rule on earth with the returned Messiah. This has never happened but it will.]

Now the Bishop is helpful in what follows:]

Third, Paul conjures up images of an emperor visiting a colony or province. The citizens go out to meet him in open country and then escort him into the city. Paul’s image of the people “meeting the Lord in the air” should be read with the assumption that the people will immediately turn around and lead the Lord back to the newly remade world.

Paul’s mixed metaphors of trumpets blowing and the living being snatched into heaven to meet the Lord are not to be understood as literal truth, as the *Left Behind* series suggests, but as a vivid and biblically allusive description of the great transformation of the present world of which he speaks elsewhere.

Paul’s misunderstood metaphors present a challenge for us: How can we reuse biblical imagery, including

Paul’s, so as to clarify the truth, not distort it? And how can we do so, as he did, in such a way as to subvert the political imagery of the dominant and dehumanizing empires of our world? We might begin by asking, What view of the world is sustained, even legitimized, by the *Left Behind* ideology? How might it be confronted and subverted by genuinely biblical thinking? For a start, is not the *Left Behind* mentality in thrall to a dualistic view of reality that allows people to pollute God’s world on the grounds that it’s all going to be destroyed soon? Wouldn’t this be overturned if we recaptured Paul’s holistic vision of God’s whole creation?

[Paul is quite clear everywhere as was Jesus that there is a single Second Coming, an event in which the saints of all the ages go out to meet the returning King and escort him to his destination in Jerusalem to rule the world from the restored throne of David.]

My further comment:

Bishop Tom Wright is helpful in exposing the pre-tribulation rapture mistake, which is so popular. The bishop is helpful to us, too, in showing that we go out to meet the returning King to escort him to the earth (1Thess. 4). This also disproves the imagined 7 years earlier “coming.” The popular mistaken view of a PRE-trib rapture has been clever: People now speak about “The Rapture” as distinct from an imagined later Second Coming. In other words they have created a noun, “RAPTURE” and then separated it from the Second Coming! Just like “splitting the Shema” or splitting man into two or splitting Jesus into two natures.

This creation of a separate event — “the rapture” — is clever and deceiving. There is in fact only one Second Coming, and it is at this one future Second Coming that we meet Jesus in the air and come to the earth with him. “By this means [and no other] we shall be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). But look how foggy the bishop is when he believes in “some future event”! There is much more to the Second Coming than that!

Jesus was quite clear. First comes the Abomination of Desolation standing where **he** ought not to (Mark 13:14). Then comes the Great Tribulation and following signs and then the Second Coming “immediately after” (Matt. 24:29).

All this exactly fits the pattern given by the prophet Daniel. The Great Tribulation is Daniel 12:1 (Matt. 24:21) and the resurrection of the dead comes next in verse 2.

This is all easy and clear. Jesus bases his view of the future on “the prophet Daniel” and refers to Daniel as the one who understood the end events. Daniel is very special. What has happened in much “liberal” commentary is that Jesus is not taken into account. In other words people have invented their own Abomination

of Desolation, either in 167 BC or in 70 AD, or if you follow the various failed “date-setters,” by a failed calculation. Any commentary on Daniel which forgets that Jesus is the true expositor (as he is also in Revelation) parts company with Jesus. This has been the blight of much commentary. Jesus expects the Abomination of Desolation to be in the final half “week” of Daniel 9:27. It is an event close to the second coming.

If we follow Jesus in Luke, we find him referring to the LXX of Zechariah 12:3 in Luke 21:24 where we have the final trampling on Jerusalem by the nations. “It will come to pass in that day that I will make Jerusalem a stone trodden on by all the nations. Everyone who tramples on it shall utterly mock at it, and all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it” (LXX, not Hebrew, of Zech. 12:3). As Jesus said, Israel “will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). This is a link to Revelation 11:2 also, where Zechariah 12:3 (LXX) and Jesus in Luke 21:24 come together. Jesus repeats in Revelation 11:2-3 what he said in Luke 21:24.

The awful event of the future is a multi-nation attack on Israel in the second half of the final seven years (detailed in Zech. 13 and 14). Jesus in Revelation and Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 is our infallible commentator on Daniel.

One way of getting rid of the future is to put it behind you! Thus the spirit of error first tried to put the Abomination of Desolation in BC times! Jesus does not do this. Bishop Wright tries to put Daniel 7:14 in the past without reading verses 18, 22 and 27!

Other commentary is convinced that Jesus came back in AD 70! Still other commentary wrongly asserts, against Jesus, that Antiochus in 167 BC fulfilled the prophecies of Daniel. But Jesus puts the Abomination of Desolation **just before the Second Coming** and Jesus warns us (“Let the reader understand”) not to abandon the infallible words of the inspired prophet Daniel. Jesus loved the prophecies of Daniel. He is the authentic interpreter of them.

This slogan will help:

*Jesus puts the Abomination in the future yet;
In Daniel's 70th “week” the Abomination will be set;
That the 70th “week” is future, therefore, let us not forget!*

Comments

“I have been receiving your *Focus on the Kingdom* newsletters for a few years now; I look forward to their arrival every month and read them avidly. Thank you very much for all the effort you make on behalf of the Good News.” — *Wales*

“I just thought I would share something to brighten your day. I have recently employed a domestic helper. We have enjoyed some brief chats about our faith while she is working. On Friday I gave her the latest two *Focus on the Kingdom* magazines. She tells me today she took them to her church group yesterday, and they were read, and passed on to the next one, until everyone had had a chance to read. She said there were many appreciative comments afterwards. So, there we are, a ‘second-hand’ mag also reaches unexpected areas in South Africa! Many thanks for all your hard work. May Yahweh continue to bless your ministry.” — *South Africa*

Marsha Galloway on “healing”:

“I appreciate the good discussion regarding healing. Having been in ‘the healing ministry’ for thirty years (no longer so), it is good to read such a balanced approach to the subject.

“If we should be doing healing today, then why aren’t all healed as they were in Jesus’ ministry? Why do most leave in the same condition they came? I’ve sure seen plenty of that. I have known many dear folk with lots of faith who have died in their sickness. I refuse to believe what we were taught: that is, they didn’t have sufficient faith. Hogwash!

“We were taught (by B.G. Leonard) that without healing and other miracles, we were only preaching half the gospel, we were only obeying half the commission given by Jesus in Mark 16:15-18. We had to perform the supernatural in order for our preaching to be in demonstration of the spirit and of power. We felt these things were a necessity, something required of us.

“What freedom now to know otherwise. As for the Scripture that should have been enough to wake us all up to our error, Matthew 7:15-23, you would be amazed at the creative ways of getting around that one!

“Coming out of error is a process; it doesn’t happen overnight. It is also a painful process, especially when those you love the most are still entrenched in it and are sure you have backslidden terribly because you no longer believe it. My own personal exodus began four years ago and sometimes I still find myself walking around in a daze. It is uplifting to read of other people’s similar journeys.” — *Missouri*

“You have been a champion of unitarianism and have made tremendous headway. I was just telling a friend that I think the Trinity lie is about to crumble. The reason I said this is because I see the Trinity being advertised more and more in evangelical churches. I attended a new church just this weekend in which the sermon and music were essentially an infomercial for Trinitarianism. If they are so confident in the Trinity, why do they advertise it? If a person is smart he doesn’t go around telling everyone

so unless he doubts it himself. The Trinitarians have become insecure. I think the death knell will be when the Jewish, Muslim, Catholic and unitarian perspectives join forces.

“The evangelical churches are competing more and more intensely for the limited number of Christians. They are no longer converting; they are only winning (customers) Christians away from other churches. They are winning them with their amped up music, dynamic preachers and youthful attitude. They build loyalty and distinguish themselves by being more Trinitarian than the next church. A competitive team rivalry is developed between the churches as to who can be more audaciously Trinitarian. I was kicked out of two Bible studies for merely mentioning unitarian verses. If they were confident, they would not be so paranoid. The preachers avoid various verses so that uncomfortable questions do not arise. One church prefers to quote out of the Living Translation. Only the bold preachers tread there and they are sure to only mention them in a context where questions will not be asked. **Last month in a Bible study a student asked how Jesus can be 200%.** The preachers responded, ‘It’s a miracle.’ Questions are discouraged and answers are insultingly juvenile. In private I told the minister that if he wants to keep that congregant he should teach both doctrines equally respectfully. He agreed with my argument so thoroughly that he phoned me the next week and childishly and with great anger told me I was wrong. Here is a funny story. His previous sermon said we should “*act* as if we have the grace of God.” I replied to his rampage by quoting his own sermon back to him.

“The problem is that Trinitarians have eyes, but they cannot read the printed page. They look at a unitarian verse and see the Trinity. Without eyes, how can they read? I talk to friends who are Trinitarian and they never disagree, but the conclusion is always the same: let’s agree to disagree. I asked an ex-Trinitarian friend what hindered him. He said ‘peer pressure.’ People feel ashamed to turn on their friends. Thus Jesus said, you must ‘hate’ your parents and leave your possessions and family behind. Notice that his apostles did this. Jesus became their only source of livelihood. How metaphorical!

“I am making a list of hindrances to turning to God. The other major hindrance is embarrassment. They are embarrassed (shame) that unitarianism is so obvious that admitting it at this late date implies they are stupid. Fear of God (shame) prevents them from seeking the truth. Only if they are truly confident that God will wipe away their shame, that their shame is already cleansed by the blood of Christ, can they ever overcome their fear and turn to God. Like Adam they hide from God due to fear of God.

“They are the very ones who fear God the most who will serve God most obediently. They are those who will shed tears of appreciation at Jesus’ feet and wipe them with their hair. But they are also the ones who have most difficulty turning to God. You and I must relieve them of social pressure and put to rest their fear of turning to God. This must be done as gently as one coaxes sheep into a pen.

“I mentioned that I perceive your [I would rather say ‘our’] role in this like that of John the Baptist. John didn’t change his mission after he baptized Jesus. Peter didn’t change his mission after Paul began proselytizing. Paul said that certain doors were closed to him.

“At the tower of Babel the nations were split such that each needed their own prophet of God, who spoke in their language and to their culture. We know Jonah was sent to Nineveh, but we do not know of the other prophets who were sent, that the Jewish faith is ignorant of. The Quran says the Jews are arrogant and think they are special because God chose to give the world the law through them. It says the Quran is to warn, not for revelation. It is for the world. Indeed it does not say a single thing that the Bible does not already teach. However, it says after the Law, man created sects (analogous to the tower of Babel). The Quran refutes the Trinity and Calvinism.

“The Jews and Muslims say Christians are blasphemous liars because of the Trinity. The Christians say Muslims are violent. The Jews will not admit that they (that is, some of them in the first century) killed the Messiah, but due to the Trinity they say they killed an admitted blasphemer.

“Above I said the Catholic Church might join forces with us. I have the crazy idea that it is to their advantage to do so. Just when the Evangelical church is veering far towards the Trinity the Catholic Church can distinguish itself, with great honor and nobility, by saying we made a mistake at Nicea. When they realize it is to their worldly advantage to see, their eyes will be opened and they will be able to read. The Catholics can then say, ‘Now that our brothers in Christ (Muslims, Jews) have helped us, we now see the error of our ways.’ The eyes of the congregants will be opened and the Protestant leaders will beg forgiveness for leading them astray.” — *Illinois*

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